



INSECURITY IN NIGERIA: GENESIS, CONSEQUENCES AND PANACEA

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Abstract:

Insecurity is one of, if not the most glaring and much talked about thing in Nigeria today. Acts of insecurity occur on daily basis throughout the country. Right thinking and sane Nigerians are really concerned about this ugly trend. This paper digs into the root causes of insecurity in Nigeria, its effects on the country and proffers/suggests ways out of this nightmare. The causes amongst so many include fundamentally illiteracy, unemployment/joblessness, poor leadership, porous nature of our borders, proliferation of arms, non-compliance with the rule of law. The effects are also there – underdevelopment, poverty, hunger, insurgency, militancy, youth restiveness, kidnapping, armed robbery, fear, drug abuse, political thuggery, etc. As part of the way out of this, this paper suggests that ‘career’ (technical) education be emphasized rather than the ‘degree’ (non-technical) education. Civics as a subject should be restored in the primary school curriculum; the country be restructured as demanded by most of the populace, community policing introduced and supported; rule of law and quality leadership firmly established and spirit of nationalism enshrined in the minds of the citizenry.

Keywords: security, insecurity, Nigeria, government, development

1. Introduction

Insecurity is at the verge of being the identity of Nigeria as no single day passes without cases of acts of insecurity. More worrisome is the fact that the Nigerian government seems to be incapable of curtailing this menace or doesn't want to stop it for undisclosed reasons. This paper joins others earlier written to challenge the leadership of the country to live up to its responsibilities by providing it with the causes and effects of insecurity and proffers solutions to it. The paper adds to the others' solutions to the problem the need to emphasize and take very seriously the technical education

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programs as this equips our teeming youths with the skills that enable them to be self-employed at graduation. Equally important is the clarion call for the restructuring of the country in such a way that all parts of the country will co-habit harmoniously and thus keep insecurity at bare.

2. Conceptual Considerations

2.1 Security

There are so many definitions and explanations of the word 'security' by so many scholars lending support to each other. Omede (2012) considers security as a dynamic situation that includes the capacity of the State/Country to ward off any threats to its deep rooted values and interests. For Akin (2008); I.C. Achumba, et al (2013); Onifade C. (2013), security is seen as the condition that is present as a result of putting in place ways for the protection of persons, information and property against hostile persons, influences and actions. It has to do with a situation where people within a given space natural or otherwise can move about without any threats both real and imagined to their lives or properties. A situation where people can sleep at night with their two eyes firmly closed. Security of lives and properties are really the fundamental reason for the existence of a government in the first place as attested by the various social contract theorists (Hobbes, Locke and Montesquieu). Prevention of aggressions to the individual both from within and without and securing for him the leverage to optimize his potentialities towards economic and social development is part of the content of security. According to Igbuzor (2011; Oche, 2001; Nwanegbo and Odigbo, 2013; Ewetan and Urhie, 2014), security entails absence of threats to peace, stability, national cohesion and integration, political and socio-economic objectives of a nation. Security also entails a situation that enables a person or nation realizes its potentials freely and smoothly. For Nweke and Nwachukwu (2014) it entails having a reasonable level of predictability at different levels of the social system, from local communities to the global level.

2.2 Insecurity

Insecurity is simply the very opposite of what we have as security. Insecurity just as security is seen also in diverse ways. Some people would take it to mean absence of safety or presence of danger; hazard; uncertainty; want of confidence; doubtful; inadequately guarded or protected; lacking stability; troubled; lack of protection and unsafe (Achumba et al, 2013). Insecurity can make one to lose confidence, be afraid, unsettled, oppressed, lose focus, and be devastated and lose one's humanness.

2.2.1 Causes of Insecurity

A. The Reality of Bad Governance

This fact remains the basic cause of insecurity in Nigeria from the past till now. The primary function of any government anywhere is the provision of basic amenities such as water, electricity, good road network, standard education and general infrastructure. Interestingly in Nigeria these basic things are not there and the people are generally

demoralized and frustrated. Logically demoralization and frustration are good fertile ground for violence and general insecurity. The lack of these basic amenities in Nigeria embarrassingly is not as a result of scarcity of funds but rather, corruption at the highest level leadership structure. A paradox of a wealthy nation with poor people in the majority as articulated by Hazen and Horner (2007).

B. The Reality of Economic Imbalance and Marginalization

This point is very glaring. Despite the harsh economic situation being experienced by the majority of the populace, very few Nigerians exhibit great affluence to the chagrin of the poor. These corrupt few tactically created this economic imbalance to perpetrate poverty among the people. The people cannot endure this forever and the consequence of this is very obvious – violent unrest. In addition to this man made imbalance is the issue of marginalization where some people or parts of the country are very intentionally excluded from benefitting from their natural endowments. Again this can only be endured for a while before the logical consequences of restiveness and demand for self-determination rear their heads in non-peaceful manners.

C. The reality of Ethnic/Religious Intolerance

In a multi ethnic and religious country like Nigeria, intolerance of the other's ethnic group and religious belief has been considered as one of the main causes of insecurity. The diverse nature of the Nigerian structure which should have been her greatest strength unfortunately turns out to be her greatest undoing. Ethnic bigotry and religious fanaticism have facilitated insecurity in Nigeria to the extent that it is gradually becoming the identity of the Nigerian State. The adherents of two major religions in Nigeria, Islam and Christianity have never especially in the northern part of the country accepted each other cordially as being created by the same God and should live harmoniously. Violence at the least provocation is a common occurrence there. Almost all violent crises in Nigeria are rooted in this ethnic/religious intolerance factor. Adagba, et al, (2012); Achumba, et al, (2013), equally maintained that the control of things like scarce resources, power, land, markets, traditional and political offices have resulted in mass killings and destruction of properties among groups in different parts of the country.

D. The Reality of Poor/Weak Security apparatus

The security system in Nigeria is considered very weak both in personnel and equipment. The security personnel are poorly and inadequately trained and poorly remunerated. As a result the expertise needed to encounter modern security challenges is not available. Equally of serious concern is the commitment of the security personnel to the Nigerian project of ensuring general security. Facts abound where these personnel abandon national interest for ethnic or regional one by sabotaging the efforts of government in achieving national security. Many of the soldiers fighting the insurgency in the northeast of the country have on some occasions been ambushed and many killed by the Boko Haram fighters as a result of information leaked to them by

those who supposed to fight them. Again huge sums of money made available for the procurement of weapons have been embezzled and misappropriated or outdated equipment purchased and the culprits were not adequately punished. In some other cases weapons meant for the Nigerian troops found their ways into the hands of the insurgents. Also noted is the lack of synergy among the security agencies. The case of some soldiers that killed three police officers and wounding others in Taraba State, who were on official duty to arrest a kidnapping kingpin not long ago further showcased the weak security system in Nigeria.

E. The Reality of the Loss of Traditional Value and Moral System

The Nigerian traditional society has some ethos and values that naturally provided and sustained security among the citizenry. Such ethos and values like absolute respect for life and its dignity recognition and praise of hard work, honesty and integrity, respect for duly constituted authority, respect for the elderly persons, justice and fair play, conviviality and hospitality made it impossible for insecurity to thrive. Presently, modernization, westernization and globalization have eroded the cherished value system that held the traditional society safe and secure and replace it with vices like adulation of materialism, celebration of criminality, dishonesty, kidnapping, banditry, cheating, get-rich-quick epidemic and general immorality. All these breed large scale insecurity.

F. The Reality of Porous Borders and Arms Proliferation

During the military regime in Nigeria whenever there was a coup d'état the announcer would always include in the announcement 'all airports, seaports and border ports closed, do not let any of the wanted persons to escape'. This simply painted the picture of how porous the borders were then and not to talk of now. In addition to the porosity of the borders are the massively corrupted border controllers. As a result of this unfortunate situation all sorts of people and arms find their ways into the country. On several occasions criminal elements have crossed the Nigerian borders to unleash criminal activities and went back successfully. Criminals in the country have also easy access to both heavy and light arms as a result of these porous borders (Hazen and Horner, 2007). Again the porous nature of the Nigerian borders has enabled non documented migrants from countries like Niger, Chad Benin, Mali and Niamey to invade Nigeria with their criminal tendencies (Adeola and Oluyemi, 2012).

G. The Reality of Politically Motivated Insecurity

the new face of insecurity we have Nigeria today, where villages are sacked and burnt, people killed wantonly including in worship centers, passengers on our high ways attacked and abducted and either killed or freed after payment of ransoms, women and girls raped, cattle rustled, kidnapping of all sorts are allegedly done by "Fulani Herdsmen and Bandits". These were criminal elements that entered Nigeria illegally, sponsored by some Nigerian politicians to cause mayhems in the event of loss of election in 2015. The result of the elections went in their favour and these criminals

were left on their own. These criminals were known to them – on the 28th of August 2019, Governor Aminu Masari of Katsina State met and dialogued with the bandits at their hide out where the leader posed for a photograph with Ak-47 gun meant for the military; on the 29th of August Zamfara bandits surrendered weapons, military uniform to the Police; on the 30th of August 50 AK – 47 Rifles were recovered from the attackers of the deputy governor of Nasarawa State; on the 5th September Katsina governor Aminu Masari visited the Fulani herdsman bandits camps in Faskari Local Government Area for negotiation after their leader visited him in Katsina. Currently, Abuja to Kaduna high way has been taken over by these bandits unmolested.

H. The Reality of Unemployment/Poverty

It is a fact that unemployment breeds poverty and extreme poverty logically leads to criminality that begets insecurity. Aliyu (1998) defined poverty as a situation in which people live below a predetermined standard value in terms of income conditions of living, hence, the rating and description of individual and nations as being poor. The United Nations consideration of poverty is even more embracing having it as *“a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a school or clinic to go; not having the land on which to grow one’s food or a job to earn one’s living, not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individual, household and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living on marginal or fragile environment without access to clean water or sanitation”*. In a society where more than 90% of the workforces who are the youths are unemployed necessarily will yield more than 90% of insecurity in such society. Nigeria has been correctly called the extreme poverty capital of the world and yet there is no reasonable program either immediate or remote on ground to lift her out of this messy situation. This situation creates an avenue for the youth to employ themselves in criminal activities that lead to insecurity according to Nwagbosa (2012). The stark reality of poverty and consequent lack of food makes the poor to indulge in violence and antisocial activities which threatens the security of the State, (Egbefo and Salihu, 2014)

3. The Consequences of Insecurity in Nigeria

3.1 Underdevelopment

Just as development thrives most in a secure environment so does underdevelopment thrives in an insecure environment. Underdevelopment is a sure bait of insecurity. Development is never realized in an atmosphere of instability, fear, threats and hopelessness. For people to invest in developmental projects, they must be certain of at least relative stability and guarantee of safety. In the absence of these as a result of insecurity then the stark reality of underdevelopment takes the center stage. In the Niger Delta region, for instance, with the exit of the oil companies and their ancillary services as a result of insecurity massive underdevelopment was recorded in that

region. Indeed insecurity and underdevelopment are like mother and child for they are inseparable.

3.2 Poverty/hunger

Insecurity naturally begets poverty and hunger. When people out of fear, threats to life and to actual killing cannot go to their places of work both agriculturally and otherwise, what sets in is hunger and general poverty. People from the Northeast and parts of North central and Northwest are displaced from their natural and ancestral habitats and now live in the Internally Displaced Camps (IDP) across the country. They no longer go to their farms or to other places of work as a result of insecurity. Consequent upon these are massive hunger and poverty. And more to this is that this region of the country is correctly termed the 'food basket' of the country and as a result of non-production of food in this region presently, the entire country is feeling the pinch of hunger and poverty. The cost of living in Nigeria today has risen up to 500%.

3.3 Insurgency/Militancy/Youth Restiveness

The emergence of these three identical factors is attributed to the state of insecurity in Nigeria. In a situation of lawlessness and a seeming failure of the State the youth component of that particular society will engage themselves in these acts above. This is the true story of Nigeria for some time now. Insurgency in the Northeast, militancy in the Niger Delta and youth restiveness in the Southeast and Southwest currently define Nigeria as one of the most unsafe places to go to in the whole world and so many countries in Europe and America are warning/advising their citizens about the danger of travelling to Nigeria.

3.4 Drug abuse/Kidnapping/Armed Robbery

Insecurity is a hydra-headed malaise that is equivalent to Pandora box. The issue of drug abuse has defied all security checks as some of the security agents are also involved in it. The Nigerian government has recently banned the importation of some of these highly abused drugs like tramadol and codeine and still they are everywhere in the open market. Kidnapping and armed robbery are inseparable twins that have wrecked unprecedented havoc in Nigeria today. No single day passes without at least ten cases of kidnapping or armed robbery operations. It is so worrisome that even security agents (policemen) were abducted and ransom demanded for their release. Nigeria is so unsafe as a result of this unfortunate state of affairs that a sitting governor in the northern part of the country did not vote in the last February 2019 general elections for fear of being kidnapped.

3.5 Brain Drain

Insecurity in the country has unfortunately led to the flight of so many of our professionals in different sectors of our life as a nation. The insecure environment in place could not guarantee the safety of these brains to function to uplift our national life

and they have to leave to other climes that provide security. Nigeria is paying dearly for this exodus of our best brains.

3.6 Poor Image in the International Community

The insecurity situation in the country has given Nigeria a very poor image abroad to the extent that investors are no longer considering the country as an investment zone. They now consider other countries around Nigeria and even some investments in the country are being relocated to nearby West African countries (Campbell, 2009). Nigerians travelling abroad are now being subjected embarrassingly to extra checks because of where they are coming from.

4. The Panacea

4.1 Value/Moral Education

Tackling in security in Nigeria needs going back to the very concept that held the traditional society secure and serene – good value and moral system. Because of the destruction and loss of our value and moral system, we also lost our humanness, hence, the need to create a new ‘humanity’. To talk of security today we must go back to our value and moral systems and revive them. Value and moral education must be put in place both formally and informally in order to rear up a generation of real human beings. Children and young adults are to be taught what our value and moral systems used to be. They must be taught how to imbibe the essence of respect for life and its dignity, honesty and fairness, hard work and its reward system, respect for constituted authority and patriotism. They must be taught to avoid antisocial behaviors like acts of criminality, violence, greed and general aggression. Therefore, moral and civic education must be brought back to our educational curriculum.

4.2 Technical/Career Education

To really get away with unemployment especially among our youths our educational system must be overhauled and designed in such a way that it must create employment at the end. The surest way to do this is to emphasize technical or career kind of education over liberal one. The 6-3-3-4 system that has been on ground for decades now has not been fully supported and planned to succeed. The newly introduced entrepreneurial studies in our universities are not adequate. Presently, entrepreneurship is taken as an ‘elective’ course and not a full department that can graduate students in different skills or profession. In order to deal decisively with youth unemployment and its consequent poverty and insecurity, the educational curriculum must be able to graduate students who will not be job seekers but job providers. Hence, the system must produce graduates who are auto-mechanics, auto-electricians, and computer mechanics, building technologists that can actually build houses, house electricians, and experts in fashion designing and tailoring, carpentry and wood works and so on. When the youths graduate with these skills unemployment and its vices will give way to a stable and secure society.

4.3 Restructuring the Nigerian State

Many people in Nigeria today believe that one the major causes of insecurity, as manifested in insurgency, militancy, youth restiveness and a call for self-determination is the current structure of Nigeria. From inception in 1914 Nigeria has never clicked as a nation rather what is observed are amorphous groups of individuals pretending to be a nation (Ojukwu, 1988). Nigeria fought a devastating civil war between 1967 and 1970 as a result of the present structure of the country. The 'Aburi Accord' which was a confederation accord was negated by the then Nigerian government led by General Yakubu Gowon. The military government of General Sanni Abacha divided Nigeria into six geo-political zones but no restructuring was considered. Creation of States or Zones is one thing and restructuring is another thing. The creation of the geo-political zones as has been seen never tackles the issue of insecurity rather it has heightened it. In the last one year, there have been calls from different regional socio-political bodies like Afenifere, Ohaneze, Middle Belt Forum and Niger Delta Forum, for serious restructuring of Nigeria. From this outlook, it is clear that every part of Nigeria wants restructuring except the North. The current structure of the country was designed to favour the North – Northeast – six states; Northwest – seven states; North central – six states; Southeast – five states; Southwest – six states and South south – six states. In terms of Local Government structures, Kano in the North has the greatest number with 44 and Bayelsa in the South with the least number of 8. With the present structure of the country restructuring is a 'sine qua non'. True federalism or confederation is sure bait to security, development and stability of the country as it is expected to align with the dynamic demands of political society (Adele, 1985; Eghosa, 1988). Soludo, C. (2018) articulated the spirit and necessity of restructuring thus; *"Restructuring is not just a political agitation, it is a foundational plan for Nigeria's future prosperity with-out oil. The contradictions of the old oil-based economy, vis-à-vis the population and geo-political pressures are swirling and the challenge of a new institutional framework to lead the emergence of the new economy is urgent"*. Restructuring in summary entails giving more powers to the federating units that made up the country as this will allow for growth through healthy competition.

4.4 Establishment of Community Policing

For effective management of insecurity to be in place, there is a dire need for a community based security outfit or structure. The members of this kind of security arrangement know very well the terrain of the locality and the neighborhood as well, know the inhabitants of the area and their characters and when strange elements enter the environ. The current composition of the Nigeria Police Force can never yield this grass root security that only the indigenes can provide. Therefore, what is on ground today in most of the Nigerian communities as 'Local Vigilant Group' should be formally recognized, given both legal and constitutional backing to complement the function of the Nigeria Police Force. And they should be adequately trained, equipped and paid to effectively carry out this sensitive task.

4.5 Development of our Security Apparatus

In line with the above factor is the total overhauling of the entire security models in Nigeria and establishing modern and pragmatic models that will stand the current existential security challenges. There has to be basically character formation of the security agents, adequate training in modern security methodologies, provision of ultra-modern equipment and adequate remuneration and good conditions of service and comfortable arrangement after service.

4.6 Rule of Law

A society that respects her laws and abides by them is always a secure and stable one. Rule of law holds supreme the laws of the land which everyone must abide with irrespective of position or office. A society that flouts or mocks her laws or discriminates against them is a chaos and failed one. In Nigeria today, rule of law is a mirage – law enforcement agents disregard the laws of the land with impunity, government both States and Federal ignore court orders and rulings, some citizens display acts that are inimical to the laws of the land and go scot free and some regional groups show themselves as being above the laws, etc. All these attitudes create a state of anarchy and lawlessness which breed insecurity. Hence, a democratic society like Nigeria must be a law abiding one. Everybody must be under the law and whoever goes against the law, no matter the position must face the wrath of the law. With this in place security, serenity and stability will be guaranteed.

4.7 Quality Leadership

This is another important factor that guarantees security in any given society. Political leadership is a career and must be seen as such, it is not all comers affairs, hence, the necessity of training as prescribed by Plato in his 'The Republic'. According to Plato quality leaders must have the capacity for abstract thinking and altruistic consideration of events and issues especially in performance. Therefore, quality leadership has nothing to do with tribe, religion, region or social strata. It is a leadership that *"would not be limited to championing the causes of their home state, tribe or religious groups, but rather focused on deeds and pronouncements which convincingly and positively impact on the entire citizenry of the federal republic"* (Kufor, 2012). In Nigeria poor leadership has been and is still the most unfortunate factor towards general development. Many Nigerians know that the bane of Nigeria's socio-economic and political development is the failure of leadership because with good leaders it could resolve its inherent problems such as tribalism; lack of patriotism; social injustice and cult of mediocrity, indiscipline and corruption (Achebe, C. 1983). Nigeria must take the issue of good leadership very seriously because good leadership amongst other things enjoys acceptability which ensures security, stability, development and tranquility.

5. Conclusion

The insecurity situation in Nigeria as a matter of fact was created by certain Nigerians and its curbing also depends on them. How they, advertently and inadvertently started it has been showcased. Hence, dealing decisively with insecurity is tenable and requires sincerity of purpose and undivided commitment on the part of the leadership of the country. Furthermore, the issue of security should be the concern of everybody both the leaders and the led and all are beckoned to contribute to its sustenance. Reliable and genuine information from the citizenry to the government is required and the safety of the informants should be guaranteed by the government. Again, government should as a matter of urgency listen to the people and address without delay all the contentious issues being raised which contributed to insecurity because responsible leadership brings about responsible followership.

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